Email faux pas can do serious damage to your career

Maria had been emailing back and forth with a colleague all day about a work issue, when she finally decided to cc the boss. "We weren't getting any closer to resolving the situation. I had to do something," she says.

It felt like the right thing to do. Maria thought her supervisor would make the decision that the two co-workers couldn't agree on. End of argument.

But that's not how it turned out. Instead, it came back to bite her. Her co-worker became angry, and her boss saw Maria's email as immature and undermining. Maria left the company shortly after, embarrassed but wiser.

"Emily Post was not around when email began," says Marsha Egan, author of *Inbox Detox and the Habit of Email Excellence.* "So people have to make up their own rules. What one person might see as absolutely fine, another might find offensive."

In the end, Maria's "cc'ing up" exhibited poor etiquette and turned into a bad career move. Avoid cc'ing up and these other email faux pas:

√ **The instant follow-up, or "Did you get my email?"** Egan describes the instant follow-up as a "gotcha" move. The etiquette, she says, is to call before sending the email. "Let them know what you'll be sending them and when." They'll be more likely to respond and read your message in the first place.

√ **Screaming via email, or typing "READ THIS."** The intent may be to grab someone's attention, but an all-cap message can come across as forceful or arrogant. The same goes for multiple exclamation points.

√ **Correcting a co-worker.** In an effort to make sure higher-ups see a clean document, a person may proofread, correct and resend an email sent by her colleague ensuring that the corrected version lands at the top of the boss's inbox. How is the effort perceived? As a way of one-upping or publicly shaming a co-worker. Nobody wins.

√ **Overflagging.** Using the priority flag for too many emails, particularly ones without a deadline or an expiration date, is a "boy who cried wolf" move. The odds are your emails will have less of a chance of being read quickly.

√ **Recycling an old email chain.** Rather than begin a new email chain to someone, you piggyback on a message already in your inbox—with an old subject line. The perception on the recipient's end may be that

you're disorganized or lazy. *Solution:* Always start a new email chain that reflects the subject being discussed.

The golden rule applies: How would you feel if you were on the receiving end of your message?

— Adapted from "10 Emails That Could Cost You Your Job," Meghan Casserly, *Forbes.*